(b) These tests have been done now in the interest of national security.

(c) These tests have established that India has a proven capability for a weaponised nuclear programme. They also provide a valuable database which is useful in the design of nuclear weapons of different yields for different applications and for different delivery systems. Further, they are expected to carry Indian scientists towards a sound computer simulation capability which may be supported by sub-critical experiments, if considered necessary.

Companies engaged in Production of Electronic Items

175. SHRI MOHINDAR SINGH KALYAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the names of the public and private sector units engaged in the production of electronic items in the country, district-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI R. JANARTHANAM): Statewise list of public and private sector units reporting production to the Department of Electronics is given in Annexure. *[See Appendix 184, Annexure No. 2]* In addition, approximately 2000 cottage industrial units are also assembling electronic items.

Rationalisation of Import Duty on Colour Monitor

176. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of total colour monitor produced in the country and the demand thereof at present;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the joint representation from domestic colour monitor manufacturers association regarding rationalisation of import duty, as reported in the Hindustan Times dated April 30, 1998; and

(c) if so, the action taken by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI R. JANARTHANAM): (a) According to information available with the Department of Electronics, the production of computer monitors was about 3 lakhs against an estimated demand of 7 lakhs during the year 1997.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Domestic colour monitor manufacturers have represented regarding rationalisation of import duty on parts of monitor *vis-a-vis* colour monitor. The representation has been examined in this Department and it is found that there is no anomaly in the duty structure as mentioned in their representation. Moreover, the import duty on parts of colour monitors is already lower than that on finished colour monitors. Also, as per the Export Import Policy 1997—2000, colour monitor parts are freely importable whereas the colour monitors of CIF value upto Rs.7500 are allowed under Special Import Licence (SIL) thus adding additional protection.

Improvement of Relations with Foreign Countries

177. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any initiatives to improve and strengthen relations with neighbouring countries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) It is Government's policy to make every effort to improve relations

with its neighbours. Specific initiatives, taken country-wise, are indicated below:

PAKISTAN

In response to the letter of felicitations received from the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Prime Minister conveyed our commitment to a sustained and comprehensive bilateral dialogue and to build a relationship based on mutual trust and regard for each other's concerns.

In January 1998, Government conveyed to the Government of Pakistan a proposal for the mechanism for future dialogue between the two countries. Pakistan has yet to respond to the proposal.

BANGLADESH

Government's commitment to sustaining a stable, friendly and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh was conveyed by Prime Minister in his letter of March 23, 1998 to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Discussions aimed at strengthening our relations with Bangladesh were held during the visit of Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Abdus Samad Azad, to India between April 20—24, 1998. During the visit, Government reiterated its commitment to promoting closer ties with Bangladesh, affirmed our interest in transit rights through Bangladesh to our North Eastern States and conveyed our interest in promoting bilateral cooperation in a variety of other areas.

SRI LANKA

Government's desire to foster cooperation with Sri Lanka was conveyed by Prime Minister to the Special Envoy of the President of Sri Lanka and Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, who visited India between March 21—23, 1998.

MYANMAR

Steps are beign taken to strengthen cooperation with the Government of Myanmar in various fields, including in trade and economic matters. The 5th National Level Meeting between the two countries, held at the level of Home Secretaries, convened in Yangon between April 26—29, 1998. Government expects to send a composite trade and economic delegation to Myanmar soon in order to assess the potential for cooperation in these fields.

MALDIVES

Our close and friendly relations with Maldives continue. The President of Maldives, H.E. Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom is expected to visit India between June 2-4, 1998.

NEPAL

Government reiterated its commitment to strengthen the existing bilateral ties between India and Nepal through letters exchanged between the Prime Ministers of India and Nepal following their respective assumption of office.

The President of India will make a State visit to Nepal from May 28-30, 1998. During the visit, the President will hold discussions with His Majesty the King, Prime Minister of Nepal and other major political leaders of Nepal. The visit is expected to further consolidate the deep-rooted freindship and understanding between the two countries.

A review of bilateral trade and transit issues took place during Commerce Secretary level talks held at New Delhi in March 1998. A review of the working of the additional transit route from Nepal to Bangladesh via Phulbari was held. Several relaxations of the operating modalities requested by the Nepalese Government were agreed to.

A number of high level interactions between India and Nepal are expected to take place shortly. These include a meeting of the Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary level talks. The High Level Task Force, which oversees Indian assisted projected in Nepal, is also expected to meet shortly. The Government has every intention to continue such high level initiatives with

a view to strengthening and consolidating the close cooperation that exists between the two countries.

BHUTAN

The Prime Minister and His Majesty the King of Bhutan have exchanged letters on a number of occasions since Prime Minister's assumption of office. The letters reiterate the commitment of both countries to continue the traditional unique ties of close cooperation and friendship that exist between India and Bhutan. Government accords high priority to deepening and further extending the wide-ranging cooperation between India and Bhutan.

CHINA

India and China are committed to work towards a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question. The Agreement on Maintenance of Border Peace and Tranquility, signed in 1993, and the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures, signed in November 1996, is contributing to maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas.

Various issues of mutual interest, including the boundary question, are being discussed in the framework of the India-China Joint Working Group and India-China Expert Group. The last meeting of the Joint Working Group was held in Delhi in August 1997. The next meeting of the Expert Group is scheduled to be held in the first week of June, 1998.

AFGHANISTAN

India has close and warm relation with the Government of Afghanistan led by President Rabbani. India's support by way of humanitarian assistance continues.

Trade and Travel Routes Linking North Eastern States to Foreign Countrels

178. SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND:
DR. RANBIR SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to open up trade and travel routes linking North Eastern States to neghbouring countries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to review the entire question of North East Border Trade and inter-country trade. Two meeting of the Task Force have been held so far, on 21 October 1997 and on 19 December, 1997. Studies have been undertaken on the export potential of these states. Related issues such as infrastructure development including transportation, warehousing, banking and customs facilities, etc. are being examined.

Under the terms of a memorandum of Understanding signed in March 1997, India and Myanmar agreed to cooperate with each other in the development of roads along the Indo-Myanmar border. The upgradation work on the Tamu-Kalemyo Road is expected to be completed by the year 2000. The India-Bangladesh Inland Waterways Transit & Trade Protocol, which has been in operation since 1972 and was last renewed upto October 3, 1999, provides transportation links through Bangladesh with the Northeastern States as well as providing trade access with Bangladesh. A Motor Vechicles Agreement with the Government of Bangladesh is being discussed. Such an agreement would facilitate trade and travel between the Northeastern states and Bangladesh.

Agreements with Foreign Countries

179. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the details of the agreements entered into by Government with various foreign countries of Europe and with America during the last six months, and the areas covered by these agreements?